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Testimony before the Labor Committee
February 25, 2010
In Support of House Bill 5202
"An Act Concerning Telecommuting Options for State Employees"

Chairs Prague and Ryan, Ranking Members Noujaim and Guglielmo and members of the Labor Committee, I am here to testify on HB 5202 - "An Act Concerning Telecommuting Options for State Employees." This is a concept the House Republican Office has proposed in the past and although our proposal is somewhat different than HB 5202, I felt it important to comment on the bill and also our proposal in hopes that the Committee and the legislature as a whole can find common ground on this worthwhile initiative.

Due to a number of factors, including rising energy costs, increased traffic congestion, and costly office overhead and overtime, telecommuting has become more and more attractive to employers, public and private alike. Many states - including the State of Connecticut - have telecommuting programs for state employees and have seen employee costs drop even as employee productivity increases.

As you know, the state's existing telecommuting program authorizes the Department of Administrative Services (DAS) to develop and implement guidelines for telecommuting. We believe that the program as it's designed works well and we would only suggest that perhaps DAS review its program to identify additional employees who might be eligible for the program that might not be taking advantage of it. We do not agree with the underlying language of the bill which appears to mandate DAS to allow all state employees to telecommute. I think we can and should realize that telecommuting cannot work in every instance and that is best left to the agency management and employees to determine.

The legislature itself could provide leadership in this area right now. All that is required is approval from the Joint Committee on Legislative Management in order for legislative

employees to be able to telecommute. Unfortunately, the legislative leadership missed this opportunity to lead when we proposed this option last year.

States with an active telecommuting program have turned thousands of lost commuting hours into productive work, saved workers millions in gas bills and reduced pollution and congestion. For example, the state of Arizona converted 181,000 hours of commuting time into productive working hours and reduced air pollution by 175,000 pounds. And a recent national study by the Consumer Electronics Association estimated that telecommuting saves enough energy in the traditional workplace to power one million households for a year and saved 3.9 million telecommuters approximately 840 million gallons of gasoline.

However, as important as telecommuting is in reducing state costs, increasing efficiency, and protecting the environment, it is only one solution. Along with expanding telecommuting options, we also proposed allowing state agencies, where feasible, to either close one day per week or rotate their workforce on a reduced 4-day workweek while still providing essential state services. Under this proposal, state employees would be required to work their same hours within a 4-day schedule. The state of Utah implemented a 4-day workweek in 2008 and by all accounts, it has been a remarkable success. Their program resulted in a 13% reduction in energy use, employees have saved an estimated \$6 million in gasoline costs, and greenhouse-gas emissions have been cut by more than 12,000 metric tons per year.

Even more importantly, by staying open more hours during the remaining 4 days, state offices became *more* accessible. Instead of having to take time off during normal business hours to do business with the state, folks can take advantage of the increased hours of operation during a "4-10" schedule.

I encourage the Committee to take the ideas contained in our proposal into consideration as HB 5202 moves through the legislative process. I look forward to working on this issue with you because we should be doing everything we can to promote government efficiency by reducing state energy costs while still providing essential services to the citizens of our state.